

Representative Steve Driehaus

Congress recently took up a bill to reform the Housing Choice Voucher Program, known also as the Section 8 voucher program. For years, I have called for major changes to this program, and as your representative in Congress I will continue to push for meaningful reform so that Section 8 is an emergency measure for our most vulnerable citizens and not a long-term public housing program.

As a member of the Financial Services Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity, I fought for changes that would improve job incentives and limit the expansion of the program. However, the current legislation does not go nearly far enough to reform Section 8 and includes too much new spending on vouchers. I opposed this bill in committee, and will vote against it when it comes before the House.

The Section 8 voucher program should not be a way of life, but a way to help people build successful and independent lives. The voucher program offers a critical safety net for the elderly, persons with disabilities, and struggling families, but the relief should be temporary assistance as program participants get back on their feet. That's why I offered legislation to stop additional spending on vouchers. Increasing the number of vouchers is the wrong solution for Section 8, and I will oppose any legislation that does not limit their expansion.

Instead, we should emphasize moving people toward steady and gainful employment, off the Section 8 program, and into independent homes. Many families in need face a lengthy waiting list for Section 8 assistance, and if we can better transition people off Section 8, we can better ensure that vouchers are used as an emergency measure for those in dire circumstances.

I successfully pushed to expand the "Moving to Work" provisions in the current reform legislation. This program helps those dependent on Section 8 find work, build savings, and move off the voucher program. Housing authorities participating in "Moving to Work" can tailor the program to the needs of their communities. Under "Moving to Work," communities have established limits on the length of time individuals are eligible to receive vouchers, and incentivized job training and placement. The limited number of "Moving to Work" cities have shown positive results, and devoting more resources to this program must be part of any meaningful Section 8 reform.

Inclusion of the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) in "Moving to Work" could help us meet some of the challenges our community is facing with respect to Section 8. I have written to Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan, urging him to include CMHA in the "Moving to Work" program should the program be expanded. CMHA is the 17<sup>th</sup> largest housing authority in the United States, and CMHA and local leaders are eager to launch a successful program to help families move to work and obtain independent housing.

I will continue push to reform Section 8 until we have a system that moves people to work and ends the cycle of dependency.